COMICS

THE GOLDEN AGE

NMP

™

EDITED BY RON GOULART

NOSTALGIA ★ ADVENTURE ★ EXCITEMENT ★ HUMOR

SILVER STREAK ★ DOC SAVAGE ★ MR. SCARLET ★ BLACK ANGEL

FOX ★ WOLVERTON ★ THOMPSON ★ COLE ★ SMITH ★ SCHWAB

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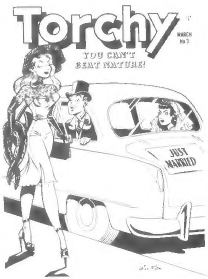

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EDITOR'S PAGE

In the summer of 1938, when I was an adorable little chap of five, my parents and I traveled across the country from California to New York in order to embark on an ocean voyage to Europe. We journeyed not on a crack luxury train nor in a streamlined twin-engine airliner but via Greyhound bus. To while away the hours when I wasn't snoozing, gazing out the window at spacious skies and amber waves of grain or asking yet again why they didn't put bathrooms on buses, I looked at comic books. Magazines that were bought for me at rest stops across the nation. Last time in this space I mentioned that I started buying comic books at about the age of four (when I say I bought them I mean, of course, that I cajoled and threatened my mother into buying them for me), but the funny books I perused on those seemingly endless trips back and forth across pre-war America are the first ones I can actually remember.

As much as I'd like to be able to state that my memories of specific comics begin with some important hero like Superman, I'm afraid the earliest clear recollections I have are of reprint comics like *Ace* and *King*. That means that while more perceptive lads were getting in on the ground floor of the first superhero craze, I was giggling over the reprinted antics of the Katzenjammer Kids and Henry, thrilling to the adventures of Flash Gordon and Tim Tyler. It wasn't until a year later, when I was back in California and embarked on the brilliant academic career that was to lead to a BA degree just sixteen years later, that I discovered costumed crimefighters. I tuned in on the Superman saga with *Action #15* (I still have the magazine, doctor. Is that symptomatic of anything?) and then discovered Batman with *Detective #31* and Sandman, in the old gasmask, cloak and slouch hat version as drawn by Bert Christman, with *Adventure #43*.

From that time on I was completely hooked. Not only did I want to read as many comic books as I could get my hands on, I wanted to write them, draw them and otherwise get in on a storytelling medium I felt was absolutely nifty. With time I modified my aims and settled for a career as a much respected novelist and essayist, but I never lost my susceptibility to comic books. I still like them and can sometimes even get excited by them. And that's one of the reasons, besides the monumental paycheck, why I'm editing *Comics: The Golden Age*.

Oh, and I have to admit that, once again, I wrote the entire issue. But I want you all to know I've started on a special diet to reduce my ego and I can assure you it won't happen again. If you'll simply glance at the boxed copy, you'll see that several new contributors will be coming aboard in the very next issue.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Our gala third issue will include a profile of PLASTIC MAN, as well as some words about his gifted creator JACK COLE, a look at that feline second banana, CAT MAN, and an interview with CREIG FLESSEL. A versatile artist, Flessel is still active and you can find his work today in magazines like *Playboy*. He was in comic books during the Golden Age, working for Major Nicholson on *More Fun*, *New Adventure* and *Detective*. Later he drew SANDMAN, THE SHINING KNIGHT and contributed to the first issues of the ground-breaking CRIME DOES NOT PAY. Craig Yoe's promised a piece on funnyman DAN GORDON, the ex-animator who drew the teenager COOKIE and numerous funny animals, including the incomparable SUPERKATT. Jerry De Fuccio, former EC scriptwriter and MAD associate editor, will be joining us as a regular contributor and Michael Barson'll have some helpful hints on a cheap way to collect Golden Age comics.

HERO · PROFILE

If the Golden Age of Comics had anything it was heroes. Big heroes, little heroes, business-suited heroes and colorfully-costumed heroes of every shape and coloration. This feature will profile one of the stars of the 1940s every issue.

SILVER STREAK

THE SINISTER ACTIVITIES OF A MAN KNOWN SIMPLY AS "DOC" HAVE BEEN A GREAT BLIGHT ON THE LAND! IN SILVER STREAK'S DECISION TO FIGHT CRIME, THE DOC HAS DISCOVERED A PROCESS BY WHICH HE CAN CHANGE THE NORMAL SIZE OF INSECTS AT WILL! DISGUISE FROM HIS HIDEOUT, THESE CREATURES HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO PREY UPON THE PUBLIC AND ITS PROPERTY! IN THIS MANNER HE HAS THREATENED THE VERY EXISTENCE OF CIVILIZATION! — SILVER STREAK, HAS SWORN TO GET THE DOC OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT!
WHAT YOU SEE IS SILVER STREAK, NOT A SHAPELESS BLUR, BUT A STREAMLINED ARROW! THE SWIFTEST SOLID THAT LEAVES BUT THE BREEZE BEHIND! FASTER THAN EVIDENCE OF HIS PASSING IS THE SOUND! THAT IS SILVER STREAK, THE FASTEST MAN IMAGINABLE! — A BOLT OF LIGHTNING EMBODIED IN A MAN! — A HUMAN BOMB WHICH KEEPS PACE WITH LIGHT RAYS AS THEY SPEED ACROSS THE LAND TO THE UTTER BAMEMENT OF EVIL WORLD'S GREATEST CRIMINALS HAVING BEEN NO MUCH DEATH AND DESTRUCTION IN THE WORLD, SILVER-STREAK REALIZES THE UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SOMEONE TO DIE OF RUST! AND RESOLVES TO BECOME AMAZING AS POSSIBLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND!!
by Ralph Johns

Late in 1939 Jack Cole got a comic book of his own to edit. The first issue of *Silver Streak Comics* has a cover date of December, 1939 and was published by an outfit called Your Guide Publications (which later metamorphisized into Lev Gleason's Comic House, Inc.). *Silver Streak* was a magazine that got going before most of its lead characters were on board, which is probably appropriate for a comic book named after a train. With one exception, none of the characters in the first issue lasted beyond the second. The Silver Streak himself didn't show up until #3.

The debut episode was drawn by Joe Simon, before he'd teamed with Jack Kirby, and had to do with a swami who built racing cars as a hobby. Every time he entered his best machine, also known as the Silver Streak, in competitions giant insects swooped down and killed his driver. Eventually he had difficulty recruiting drivers and had to resort to hypnotizing a cleancut young taxi driver into shape for the job. A giant fly killed the cab driver, too, but the swami brought him back to life and the young man took to dri-

PHEW!! AND I THOUGHT I WAS FAST!—OH WELL, IT MIGHT CHEER THE KIDDIES UP TO GET A LOOK AT A FUGITIVE FROM A FREAK SHOW!—
THE FOLLOWING EVENING, SILVER STREAK KEEPS HIS FORCED APPOINTMENT
AND NOW, CHILDREN, I WANT YOU TO MEET THE GENTLEMAN THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS TALKING ABOUT—HE SIMPLY BEGGED FOR A CHANCE TO PERFORM FOR YOU! MR. STEEL STREAK!!
THE NAME IS—
THE CHILDREN ARE DELIGHTED AT THIS DISPLAY OF SUPER-SPEED
SILVER STREAK!!
SILVER STREAK'S PERFORMANCE LASTS A GOOD TEN MINUTES

ving around in the racing car, calling himself the Silver Streak, too, and hunting for the source of the giant insects.

Cole took over the strip with the next issue, converting the Streak into a costumed superguy who was "the fastest man imaginable!!" The better known speed demon The Flash, AKA the "fastest man alive", had come zipping onto the newsstands just a couple months earlier. Carrying on as though no changes had taken place, Cole had his swift hero continue with the pursuit and capture of the sinister scientist who'd been menacing the metropolis with big bugs and giant spiders. For a few months the Streak was the star of the magazine that bore his name. His costume went from being purple, green and orange to a more striking red and yellow. Cole was obviously having fun with this one, cramming it with action, violence, explosions, monsters, pretty girls and humor. Since some of the SS stories ran a full eleven pages, he had the opportunity for full page splashes and fairly intricately plotted adventures.

He used the penname Ralph Johns and in #5 he addressed the reader directly to explain "some things you ought to know about SILVER STREAK." Apparently with a straight face Cole said, "His purpose in life is to help others—to help those in need. Silver Streak does his best to make this world an ideal place to live in—a world in which you and I will have the things we most desire. And he is out to get those forces that stand in the way of his ideals. He fights hard!! He is strong because he is right—he is fast because he needs speed to conquer his enemies. Silver Streak is my hero and I hope he is your hero, too, for he does the things that you and I would do if we had his powers."

After the Silver Streak brought the chap responsible for the oversized insects to justice, he tackled a hooded cult of silver worshippers. They carried their worship to the point of stealing silver from various banks and savings institutions. In a subsequent adventure SS raced an arrogant British aviator around the world, pausing on the way to save a maiden from becoming the slave of a wicked Arab and picking up a pet falcon. Because the creature, named Zoom, has had a transfusion of the Streak's blood, he's "the fastest, most breathtaking bird alive!" Silver Streak, along with his bird companion, next cleaned up Fantasy Isle, "evil dwelling-place of a strange people." Following that he encountered, in what Cole labeled a "two-in-one story", both a spy ring and a gang of counterfeiters. Zoom changed his name to Whiz in this one and the hurried Cole forgot to draw the Streak's hair in the final panel

SILVER STREAK
AND
ZOOM
KING OF FALCONS
SILVER STREAK
LONE METEOR OF JUSTICE JOINS FORCES WITH A NEW AND SENSATIONAL COMPANION
ZOOM-KING OF FALCONS
THE FASTEST, MOST BREATH-TAKING BIRD ALIVE!- TOGETHER THESE TWO POLICE THE WORLD PUTTING DOWN CRIME AND MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER THROUGHOUT
ZOOM ACME OF SPEED WAS BORN WHEN THE EVIL ALI-BEN-HASSEN INJECTED HIS PET FALCON WITH SILVER STREAK'S BLOOD!
AND SAVED SILVER-STREAK'S LIFE!- FROM THAT MOMENT THE TWO BECAME INSEPARABLE COMPANIONS!
AT LAS I'VE FO MY SOU IN A RA
BUT THE FALCON TURNED ON ITS MASTER

and the colorist colored him bald.

One of the reasons Jack Cole was hurried was because he was also drawing Daredevil and this hero, due to his monumental several issue battle with the gigantic Oriental villain known as the Claw, became the star of the magazine. With issue #9 (April, 1941) Bob Wood assumed the Silver Streak art chores. Wood was getting some help from George "Inky" Roussos, who was also lending Bob Kane an occasional hand. The result is these SS stories look quite a bit like the Batman stories of the period. Silver Streak, during Wood's brief tenure, had a run in with a meanminded robot named Iron Jaw and then battled Wang Fo, "probably the cleverest criminal alive!!" Iron Jaw, by the way, seems to have built himself since we're never told that a human being had anything to do with his creation. President Roosevelt appeared and gave the Streak the Congressional Medal of Honor for turning the mechanical man into "but a shamble of metallic ruins."

Not content to pal around merely with a bird, Silver Streak added a boy companion to the menage in #11 (June, 1941). A shoeshine boy named Mickey O'Toole gets into a ruckus with a notorious gangster, is picked up by the Streak, taken to his apartment and given a physical test. He passes and is informed he's "now ready for an injection of my SECRET FLUID... which will give you the power to OVERCOME THE LAW OF GRAVITY and travel through the air at tremendous speeds." Mickey becomes Mercury, the Boy Streak. Jack Cole had left the editorship by this time and now Wood gave up SS to work with Charles Biro on the new Daredevil magazine. Don Rico took over Silver Streak. The falcon was dropped and Mickey changed his monicker to Meteor the Boy Speed King. He also changed the color of his hair from blond to black and added a domino mask and cape to his outfit. The Streak made these latter changes, too. He and his speedy sidekick went zipping into retirement after #19 (March, 1942). The magazine lasted two more issues beyond that, with the somewhat more sophisticated Saint as its leading man, and then transformed itself into *Crime Does Not Pay*.

Silver Streak revived briefly in the middle 1940s, mostly in a few reprint issues. There was also one number of *Dime Comics* about this time, with an L.B. Cole cover and a brand new adventure of SS. One of the reprints offered four of the handsome Jack Cole episodes. The magazine had an impressive cover by Dick Briefer, showing the Streak whizzing to the rescue of a redhaired lady who's strapped to a torture table. The device comes equipped with a torture meter and we see that it can deliver everything from Mild Pain through Severe Headache to Death. Silver Streak bursts in just as the needle is hovering at Unbearable Agony.

AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, LET'S MAKE THIS A REAL RACE — SAY AROUND THE WORLD
ROUND THE WORLD!! ☆GULP☆ Y-Y-Y-YES! BUT HOW DID YOU GET 'ERE SO BLINKIN' QUICK??
LIKE THIS—!
SIMPLE, ISN'T IT?— LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE READY TO START!
?????
S-SOMETHING TELLS ME WE'VE MADE A BALLY B-B-BAD WAGER!
PAT'S FUNNY— I DON'T HEAR NUTTIN'!
BUT WITH THE PASSING OF TIME, SIR CEDRIC REGAINS HIS CONFIDENCE AND ON THE DAY OF THE SCHEDULED RACE, HE IS AS COCKY AND SELF-IMPORTANT AS EVER!
ANY WORD FOR THE PRESS, SIR CEDRIC?
GENTLEMEN, IF HI CAWN'T BEAT THIS UPSTART, HI'LL EAT MY SHIRT!!
MY BOSS!
AND WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY, SILVER STREAK?
SIMPLY THAT SIR CEDRIC COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A NICER SHIRT
HUGH FALLS OVER THE CROWD AS THE STARTER RAISES HIS PISTOL — THEY'RE OFF!— OR RATHER, SILVER STREAK IS OFF, LEAVING SIR CEDRIC AT THE POST!
HE'S OUTTA SIGHT, ALREADY!
WELL, CHEW MY CHICLE!
BAM!
STRAIGHT OUT ON THE OCEAN GOING THIS ACE OF SPEED!
WHAT WUZ THAT??
A TORPEDO! HIT FER SHORE!
PARDON THE WET DUST!
IN NO TIME, HE IS OVER EUROPE
HITLER'S WAR! MIGHT'S WELL PUT IN MY TWO CENTS WORTH!
HIMMEL!
VAS ISS?
THAT'S GIVING 'EM A RIDE!
ZOOM
DROPPING TO EARTH, SILVER STREAK RACES THROUGH THE INVADER TRENCHES, PLOWING MEN HIGH INTO VIEW!

THE GOLDEN AGE interview

CONDUCTED BY RON GOULART

A veteran of half a century in cartooning, Gill Fox worked in comics during the 1930s and early 1940s and again after the Second World War. Still active, he has a half dozen projects in the works. After leaving comics he did several newspaper features before taking over the widely syndicated Side Glances *panel. When he worked for Busy Arnold's Quality group, the versatile Fox provided humor fillers (creating Poison Ivy, Wun Cloo and Slaphappy Pappy), drew superhero covers and eventually edited* Police, Smash, Crack *and* Feature. *On the covers of these he drew such characters as Doll Man, the Black Condor and Plastic Man. After the war he even drew the sexy blonde Torchy. A gregarious man, Fox was friends with such GA artists as Jack Cole, Alex Kotzky, Creig Flessel, Will Eisner and Charles Biro.*

He and his wife live in Connecticut and in his spare time Fox is a dedicated badminton player. One of his two daughters works as a letterer on comic strips and comic book features. This interview took place in March of this year.

GILL FOX

C:GA: Let's start with the simple stuff like where you were born and so forth.

FOX: I was born in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn... a very pleasant beginning.

C:GA: Your sister Lorraine was a well-known magazine illustrator. Was there a family tradition of art?

FOX: We almost make a joke of it, and there's no way of proving it... but supposedly a very famous Renaissance artist on the Italian side of the family... we were descended from. If I name him everybody thinks I'm nuts. And we have no proof.

C:GA: Was anybody in your more immediate family an artist?

FOX: No, no one at all. Outside of one thing... I was born right down the block from where my father was raised as a little boy and on the whitewashed walls of the basement he'd drawn cartoons. And he was pretty good. That never left my mind and I saw this when I was somewhere between three and five and never forgot it.

C:GA: You never saw him actually draw?

FOX: I did, yes. He'd draw simple heads and he was better than the average person. But that's all he'd ever do. He was a milkman.

C:GA: You took art courses in school?

FOX: Yes, immediately in grammar school. And I went to an industrial high that had courses in advertising and cartooning. I was enthusiastic enough to take a life class on the side. At the same time, too, I was taking a correspondence course from the Landon School.

C:GA: How did you get into the comic book business initially?

FOX: The first one I went to was Cook (William Cook at *Funny Pages*). He had a flat nose, like a fighter. The reason I went there.... I was at Fleischer's and working in the inking department.

C:GA: That's right. You worked in animation first.

FOX: Yes, I think I was there about two years. Every guy in that inking department was a young, hungry guy who had aspirations to be a cartoonist. And we knew every trick and every market that opened up.

C:GA: So that's how you heard about comic books?

POISON IVY
BY: WILL FOX
WOW! BOY, IS HE HEAVY!
IT'S GOING TO BE HEAVY TO GET THROUGH ANY ITS STEEL WALLS!
I'LL CLIP CHESTER AND THEN THROUGH ANY ITS STEEL WALLS!
I'LL CATCH IT AS IT COMES THROUGH!
SINCE HE ARE DOES CAUGHT IT IN CHESTER'S HANDS WHERE THIS METAL BOMB WILL DO THE LEAST HARM!
ONE HOUR LATER
THE AVERAGE BOY WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT FOR THIS BALL!
THE WORLD'S PERFECT BALL!
POP!

FOX: I got word about Cook and went over to him with a half-assed page. He looked at it and I could see he was seriously considering it... but then he turned it down. I think I went to Jacquet (at Centaur) from there and then over to the Chesler shop.

C:GA: Did you sell Jacquet anything?

FOX: Yes. In fact, I was doing... I did covers. Oh, they were so bad. I even sold him the page I'd shown Cook.

C:GA: How'd you hear about the Chesler shop?

FOX: Wait a minute... I think I must've read a newspaper ad. Old Chesler was running ads, probably in the New York *Times*. I went in, told him I was doing Ripley type pages and Hollywood stuff. Chesler said, let's see four sample fact pages. And I sat home for a week, did four pages, went in and... I can remember standing in front of his desk and he looked at the pages and he says, you got the job. You start Monday. I got so excited my nose started to bleed.

C:GA: What was the salary he was offering you?

FOX: Twenty dollars a week! And I figured the first week... he was going to pay me five dollars extra for each of those four pages. So I thought to myself, at the end of the first week I get twenty dollars of salary and twenty for the pages. Forty dollars! That's more than my father was making.... The son of a bitch, he never paid me for those extra pages.

C:GA: But you did get the salary?

FOX: I got twenty dollars a week for the year I was there. Full time, five days a week.

C:GA: Who else was there when you were there?

FOX: Okay, Frank Frollo sat behind me. In front of me was Paul Gustavson. Then there was Charlie Biro, Bob Wood... Ken Ernst was there briefly, not too long. Running the place, about six months after I'd been there was Binder. Jack Cole was there... the kid, Fred Schwab. Rafael Astarita. Oh, and Fred Guardineer.

C:GA: Most of them young?

FOX: From 18 to 23 was your usual range.

C:GA: How did you get over to Arnold and Quality?

FOX: We're in the midst of the Depression... I'm trying to think what the hell happened. I was there at Chesler's shop and then I went through a period of maybe six months with no work... and I was riding on the Lexington Avenue bus. I knew Arnold's address and, instinctively, something told

SLAP HAPPY PAPPY
BY: WILL FOX
IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE WAY I'M RUNNING THIS BUSINESS YOU CAN TAKE YOUR SHARE AND GET OUT!
GREAT DAY! SOB PROMPT IS SO BAD THEY GIVE US EXTRA SPACE!
HEY! WOT'S THIS CLOWN DOING IN MY BOAT?
PASSION SUN FOR COMIC IT GIVES ONLY ABOUT
OH, I'M A MANAGER! AND I HAVEN'T BEEN PAID SO MUCH IT DAN COMPLETELY YET. WE'RE MAKING SO A MANY INVENTED AHEAD THAT I'M TOHN WHAT WE TO USE IT FOR! I'M GOING TO THIS SMALL AREA!
A CONTRADICTION!
HEY, DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!!
NOW I KNOW WHY THEY CALL IT A DUMP!
MUH GOODNESS! HE'S BEEN CAUGHT OUT! AH GUESS AHLL HAFTA GIVE HIS PLACE!
WELL I'M GET TO SEE TH HAYDN FOR A CHANGE! PARTY OF DAMNABLE!
YES SUH, MR HAYDEN! AH HAVE LIGHT RIGG TO TYO HEAVY RANG TO BE TRANSPORTED ON CORE BUSSES TOOO A SUPPLY!

HOW MANY HOT DOGS DO YOU WANT? ONE OR TWO POUNDS?
OH, GIVE ME A STRING OF THEM THREE FEET LONG!
HERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU GIRLS. I'VE GOT A REAL TREAT FOR YOU!

me to get off the bus and go up there with no appointment. And I did... and saw Ed Cronin, who was editing. That's how the whole thing started. I came up with Wun Cloo. If I had the enthusiasm I had then now I could kill this whole business.

C:GA: You sound like you've still got it.

FOX: I brought it in and Ed Cronin looked at it and said, "Gee, great, do two pages a month." I said how much? $8 a page! My god, a $3 raise. From there it began to bloom. I did that for six months and then they were going to move from New York City to Stamford, Connecticut. Ed asked me if I'd be willing to come along and be his assistant. I say, how much? He said $25 a week. I say, my god, I can get married.

C:GA: You were—

FOX: Assistant editor. Pasting up, lettering.

C:GA: Now when Cronin left you became editor of most of the magazines Arnold had at the time.

FOX: That's right, but with watered down authority. Arnold was always the boss.

C:GA: The guys you had there... like Lou Fine, Gustavson, Jack Cole... could you okay their stuff?

FOX: No, they'd come in with their material. I'd proofread it, check it. That was my job. In addition to the copyreading, there was production. In other words, I had to keep things moving, keep the books on deadline. If a new artist came in I could look at the stuff, but I couldn't buy a feature. I'd have to go to Arnold.

***C:GA: How did you work when you drew the covers for* Crack, Hit....**

FOX: Ed was doing the covers originally. When I came in he asked if I thought I could ink his pencils. He had them down to almost reproduction size. And I said, yeah. But as I began to ink... he had a lot of strange eccentric drawing quirks. I said to him, can I pencil some? I began to refine the things, because I could draw better than he could. I improved the whole look of the covers and when Ed quit I was on my own.

C:GA: Did you get extra money for doing the covers?

FOX: No, that was strictly on salary. I had to draw the damn things within the salary frame. However, I did continue to do filler pages. By that time Arnold had raised the rate to $15 or $20 a page. I'd work on those at home at night for extra income.

C:GA: You were editing* Police Comics *from the first?

FOX: Yes, right from the inception.

C:GA: When Police started, the lead character was Firebrand by Reed Crandell. Up in the middle someplace were five or six pages of Plastic Man by Jack Cole. The impression I have is that nobody thought Plastic Man was going to be a star.

FOX: That's true. Jack's real talent... he was developing rapidly... nobody realized how good he really was.

C:GA: Somewhere along the way you must've gotten some response from distributors or fans....

FOX: I didn't get it. I was still tied in with production and all, but evidently Arnold got a response. It's the same as Superman. What method was used I don't know, but they found out what was selling that book.

C:GA: You were a personal friend of both Jack Cole and Lou Fine....

FOX: Socially and workwise, yes.

C:GA: Just quickly, your impressions. First of Cole.

FOX: I have run across very, very few guys with the kind of mentality Jack had. By that I mean, able to conceive something that's never been done before, entirely fresh.

Dik Brown's like that, too. But Jack was crazier, he had a wild mind. But... we'd meet, we knew them and all... not like Lou. Lou was very close to me, you could tell him your family problems, anything. Jack was different, he didn't open up.

C:GA: You told me before that some of the Quality artists, such as Vernon Henkel, you never knew.

FOX: I never met the guy. That stuff would come in through the mail, and, my god, he'd pour it out like he had an open faucet.

C:GA: What about Guardineer, did he come in?

FOX: We didn't see him. That probably came in through the mail.

C:GA: People like Al Bryant, who did so many covers....

FOX: Al would come in off and on. And then in '46, when I came back from the service, I saw a lot of Al.

C:GA: The highpoint of your career after the war was, of course, Torchy.

FOX: Arnold welcomed me back and I got all kinds of freelance. They were now in a big office in Manhattan. That's how Torchy started. Arnold asked me to fill in for Bill Ward. Now I was still very conservative in my thinking, but I loved drawing pretty girls. I had a reputation that I could do it. But I knew that feature, as I got those damn scripts, was going to run into trouble. Sure enough, they had trouble in Boston....

C:GA: Let's go back for a minute. You worked with Eisner on the Spirit, didn't you?

FOX: Before the War. Arnold knew my abilities. At one point he told me Eisner was tied up... and I was delighted, I felt good. Arnold was a Yankee and didn't show too much emotion and never gave you any praise. But he said he wanted me to write a sequence with Ebony for the dailies. And I was absolutely elated, because it indicated that Arnold had that much faith in me. I went home and in one day... I was amazed... I had a whole five week sequence.

C:GA: Did you ever letter the Spirit?

FOX: I wouldn't say I didn't. I think I did incidently.

***C:GA: You were friends with Biro. Did you ever get involved with him on* Crime Does Not Pay?**

FOX: I had a bad period when I didn't have work. I went to Charlie and they said fine. Bob Wood said, here, do this. And he gave me a straight script. Two pages. I got home and looked at it and, Jesus, I said, I can't do this. My brother-in-law was over, Bernie D'Andrea (a successful magazine illustrator). I said, Hey, Bernie, can you break this down? So he did and I went over it. Took it in, got paid and that was all I ever did for them.

C:GA: Your last comic book was....

FOX: Roughly 1951. That would've been Candy. Harry Sahle... I don't know where he was, but I was pencilling Candy.

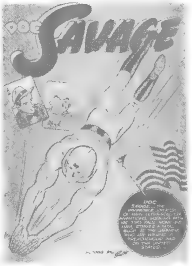
C:GA: What are your overall feelings about your time in comic books?

FOX: I'll give you an insight, and I think it's a good one. But the young guys are not going to like what I say. I've said this repeatedly. To me it was just a tide over... a thing you did to learn to draw until you got into syndication. However, the bad thing was it dulled your sensitivity and your taste.

C:GA: But basically it was a pleasant experience?

FOX: Oh, hell, listen. If I'm drawing I just love it.

GOLDEN AGE Portfolio



Another eclectic selection this time around, offering you two superheroes and a spoof.

Jack Cole's first shape-changing hero wasn't the redclad Plastic Man but rather an obscure chap named Mantoka. Billed as a Makèr of Indian Magic, Mantoka appeared in just two issues of Centaur's *Funny Pages* early in 1940. Although Cole was still over a year away from Plas, his style was already moving away from its earlier big foot look. He hid behind the pen-name Richard Bruce, borrowing the first and middle names of his brother.

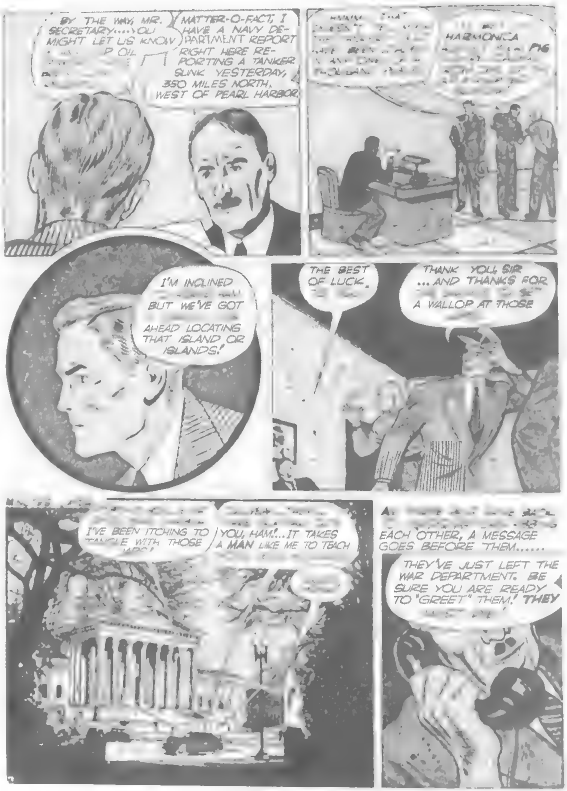
Next, the Man of Bronze, Doc Savage, from an Autumn 1942 issue of his own comic book. The impressive artwork is by William A. Smith. Smith, who later became a successful illustrator and gallery painter, was in his early twenties when he did this job. He also worked for DC and Dell. Those who know the formidable Clark Savage only from the old pulp magazines and paperback reprints will encounter a somewhat different Doc herein. Although the pulp character, created by writer Lester Dent, had inspired numerous comic book supermen, it was apparently thought necessary to beef him up some for his comics appearances. Hence the costume and the magic ruby. You'll notice, too, that his crew of colorful sidekicks has been cut down to just two.

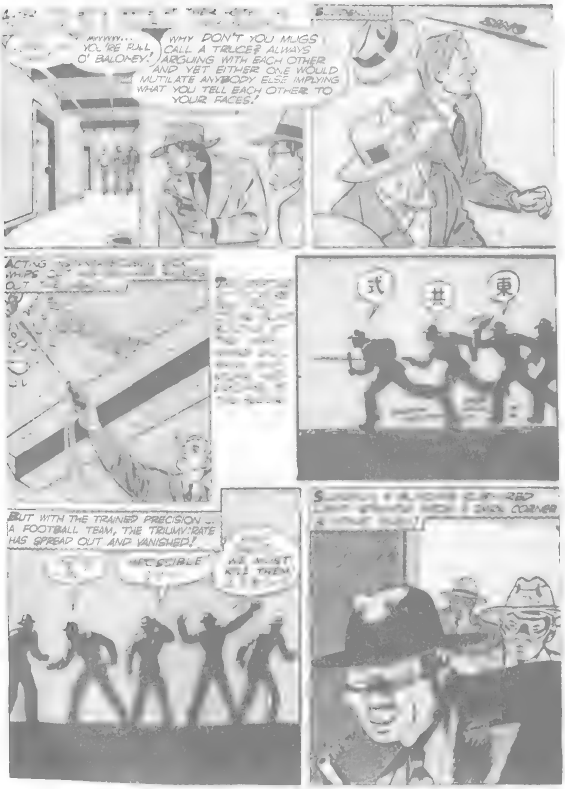
Fred Schwab, the boy cartoonist, returns with Hemlock Shomes and Dr. Potsam. Done in Schwab's usual lively style, this isn't exactly a parody of Conan Doyle's immortal sleuth but more a send up of detective yarns in general. This caper ran originally in *Mysterymen Comics* in 1939.

DOC SAVAGE
Monk
DOC SAVAGE... THE INVINCIBLE... CREATOR OF MANY ULTRA-SCIENTIFIC INVENTIONS, WORKING WITH HIS TWO PALS, MONK AND HAM, STRIKES A FATAL BLOW AT THE JAPANESE WHO ARE WAGING A TREACHEROUS WAR ON THE UNITED STATES....
PICTURES BY

JAPAN.'
I KNOW YOUR PLAN WELL AND PROVED
SELF. I WILL CONSENT
HAVE LOST NOTHING
NOTHING.....
I SAY
OR... OR
I'LL CALL THE
DON'T.
STOP! D-DON'T
SH-SHOOT... I'LL
DOCTOR....
OF LEAD! HEH, HEH!

EVER SINCE PEARL HARBOR!... THE MOST
WE'LL GIVE THEM
WE'LL BEAT THEM IN
WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE DO THEY THINK WE ARE...?
OPINION OF QUICK VICTORY. THE JAPS LANDED ON THE PHILIPPINES AND DROVE THE COMBINED U.S. FILIPINO FORCES BACK, BACK, UNTIL
RIGHT AFTER THE FALL OF MANILA, DOC SAVA... AND HIS TWO PALS---MONK AND HAM ARE CALLED TO WASHINGTON TO THE WAR DEPARTME...
IN MY OPINION, SIR, THEY HAVE A NEW, SECRET OIL SOURCE WHICH
THAT SECRET OIL FIELD... WILL YOU DO IT?
AND WE WON'T FAIL... DEPEND ON THAT, SIR!


BY THE WAY, MR. SECRETARY.... YOU MIGHT LET US KNOW IF OIL
MATTER-O-FACT, I HAVE A NAVY DEPARTMENT REPORT RIGHT HERE REPORTING A TANKER SUNK YESTERDAY, 350 MILES NORTH, WEST OF PEARL HARBOR.
HARMONICA
I'M INCLINED BUT WE'VE GOT AHEAD LOCATING THAT ISLAND, OR ISLANDS!"
THE BEST OF LUCK,
THANK YOU, SIR ... AND THANKS FOR A WALLOP AT THOSE
I'VE BEEN ITCHING TO TANGLE WITH THOSE
YOU, HAM!...IT TAKES A MAN LIKE ME TO TEACH
EACH OTHER, A MESSAGE GOES BEFORE THEM.....
THEY'VE JUST LEFT THE WAR DEPARTMENT. BE SURE YOU ARE READY TO "GREET" THEM,! THEY


MYYYYY... YOU'RE RALL O' BALONEY!
WHY DON'T YOU MUGS CALL A TRUCE? ALWAYS ARGUING WITH EACH OTHER AND YET EITHER ONE WOULD MUTILATE ANYBODY ELSE IMPLYING WHAT YOU TELL EACH OTHER TO YOUR FACES!
SMACK
ACTING WHIPS OUT
式
#
東
BUT WITH THE TRAINED PRECISION OF A FOOTBALL TEAM, THE TRIUMVIRATE HAS SPREAD OUT AND VANISHED!
IMPOSSIBLE
WE MUST KILL THEM
SLUGGED

OUT OF A CORNER, HEADING THE SACRED HOLD WITH THE HOLLER WORKING OVER SAVAGE.....
THE BLURB HE IS THE JAPS' VISION AND THEIR BRAINS BUT DO NOT TELL THEM
SAVAGE! ...LL HIM!
BANG
BANG
BANG
MOVE AND DIRECTION
JAP HANDS SLAP
YOU SLAP HAPPY NO?
I ALWAYS HEARD JAPS HAVE BOFT JAWS!..... NOW I KNOW IT!
DOC, ATTACKING THREE OF THE BROWN MEN, FARES SOMEWHAT BETTER....
来て

...HIS FAST THINKING AND ACTION SAVE DOC FROM WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DEATH!
LOOK OUT, YOU!
BANG
LOOKS LIKE
LOOK THROUGH
OIL!

SECONDS LATER THE THREE JAP FIGHTERS TOWARD THE
ABOARD THEIR LONG-RANGE
WE'RE NOT USING REGULAR HIGH-EXPLOSIVE BOMBS, MONK... I'M TRYING OUT THE NEW CONCENTRATED-CAPSULE BOMB I DEVELOPED
PLANE APPROACHING. FIFTEEN MINUTES SOUTH, SIR!
... AND THE JAPS SEND UP INTERCEPTORS!
MAN YOUR GUNS!

UNAWARE OF THE SPEED OF DOC'S PLAN THE JAPS ARE CLOSING IN AND FINISH GELVES ON THE LEFT!
ONE DOWN... FIVE TO GO... KEEP 'EM OFF, DOC.. FEED 'EM!
OUCH, HELL!
IN THE NICK OF TIME!
BY THE 'BIG 5'!
WHOOPPEEE!.. THAT'S CUTTIN' DOWN THE ODDS... FOUR TO ONE NOW!
DOC GOES INTO A LOOP AS THE JAP PLANES JOCKEY TO GET ON THE BOMBER'S TAIL....
WITH THE JAP PLANES DIRECTLY BELOW, MONK GETS A CRAZY IDEA AND PICKS UP ONE OF DOC'S CONCENTRATED BOMBS...
IT'S 1000 TO 1 CHANCE... BUT IF IT WORKS..... OH BOY.'
MIRACULOUS!... THE BOMB FINDS ITS TARGET!
BOOM

AND THE TERRIFIC CONCUSSION SNAPS THE WINGS OF A SECOND PLANE!
...BUT ROLL RIGHT INTO DOC'S PATH...!
HOLY SMOKE ...WE'RE GONNA CRASH INTO 'EM!
OH...OH, THIS DOES LOOK BAD, DOC!
AND MONK EXPLODES THEM OFF WITH HIS
DOC PULLS UP JUST IN TIME...

SLIPPING OFF HIS ELABORATE GEAR, DOC STANDS IN HIS INVISIBLE BLUE COSTUME. OVER THE SHINY HEADPIECE HE PLACES THE TRANSPARENT GLASS HELMET WITH A DOUBLE SUPPLY OF CONCENTRATED OXYGEN TABLETS AROUND HIS NECK...
TAKE OVER, MONK... AND LOOK AFTER HIS PAL'S SAFETY!
WHEN SHALL WE PICK YOU UP?
WATCH FOR THE RUBY LIGHT...I'LL FLASH IT TO YOU TWICE...SO LONG!
AS THE PLANE ZOOMS OVER THE SHIP...
WOW!...THEY MUST HAVE TEN GUNS TRAINED ON US!... HOPE THEY DON'T GET LUCKY WITH ONE O' THOSE SHELLS!
BOOM
BOOM
AS DOC SAVAGE HITS THE WATER, A SHELL BURSTS JUST ABOVE HI...

WELL I'LL BE... OIL WELLS ON THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN!

THERE MUST BE MORE... WE GOT TO FIND EACH ONE SO WE CAN DESTROY THEM ALL!
AFTER SE[illegible] ...LOT HAS SMASHED ...N FIELDS ... THEIR ...ZE ... PER RICKS, HE MAPS THEIR LOCATIONS ON OIL SILK.....
NOW TO FLASH HAM AND MONK AND HAVE THEM DROP DOWN AND PICK ME UP...
SUDDENLY A SECTION OF THE RIPPLED STEEL NET ON WHICH DOC & THE OTHERS HA.....
TOPPLING ...' DOWN...DOWN...DOWN... AT THE BOTTOM, WHERE MAPS HOLD A HUGE NET...
?
...SAVAGE!...
YOU'VE ... SECRET OIL SUPPLY, DOC SAVAGE, BUT WITH THIS ...YOU DIE!
I'VE GOT A TOUGH ...DE, YELLOW BE..... TRY IT.!

GRAB HIM! ...HELP! AGGH! UGH!
...BUT YOU'RE PLAYING ON MY SIDE!
THE STARTLED LEADER BECOMES DOC'S WEAPON...
HELP!
YOU'RE HELPING ME!
TRIPLE BAGGER!
SMACK!
BAM!
SECONDS LATER...
HO-HO!... CLEANED OUT AN ENTIRE NEST SINGLE-HANDED... WAIT'LL I TELL MOVIK AND HAM ...THEY'LL NEVER BELIEVE ME!

A SHORT WHILE LATER, DOC FLASHES THE RUBY LIGHT TO MONK AND HAM...
WELL I'LL BE A MONKEY'S UNCLE!.... HE'S STILL SWIMMIN' AROUND IN THE OCEAN....
CUT THE GAB AND DROP DOWN TO PICK HIM UP!
AND HOW!...TWENTY SUNK IN THE V-DOLE OF THE OCEAN!
DOC SAVAGE EXPLAND THE MARINE OIL WELLS TO MONK AND HAM AND THEN CIRCLES OVER THE FIRST WELL AND DROPS A LOAD OF BOMBS!

BLUE'S DIES!
JAP'S DIE!
POOM!
SLEEPY
LAST FACT IS A LITTLE TWISTED!
THE SAVAGE

HEMLOCK SHOMES and Dr. Potsam
by FRED
ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN SHOMES AND POTSAM TO ANY PERSONS...LIVING OR DEAD, IS A DARN SHAME - HONEST IT IS!!
SLEUTH DETECTIVE AGENCY, INC.
HECK! THOSE DOGGONE GANGSTERS WIPED THEMSELVES OUT IN THAT GANG WAR LAST MONTH - NOW CRIME IS AT A STANDSTILL NOT IN THIS TOWN!
WE'LL STARVE IF SOMETHIN' DON'T TURN UP SOON
POLIC
YIP-EEEEE!! I HOPE A NICE BLOOMIN' FIRST DEGREE MURDER!
FEE-E-OOW
OUCH!
EEE-EE
EEEE!
WHERE'S THE BODY??
WHUT HAPPENED??
OH GRACIOUS ME! I'M SO SORRY I DISTURBED YOU!! I DO HOPE YOU WILL FORGIVE ME!!
OH DEAR ME!
YOU SEE - WHEN I'M AT HOME THE WIFE WON'T LET ME TALK - AND AT WORK MY BOSS WON'T LET ME TALK - GOSH! A FELLOW HAS TO BLOW OFF SOME STEAM AT LEAST ONCE IN A WHILE - NO?
GIMME THE BADGE DOC! T'S MY TURN TO WEAR IT!
AW HECK!!

CATCH HIM?
THE GUY BEHIND THAT VOICE! HE'S ADMITTING THAT HE'S GUILTY!
SURE I DONE IT! CROSS MY HEART I DID!
MRAAAAAHAHA!
HAW...
CHIEF! HE JUST STOLE 60 GARBAGE CANS—AND HE PULLED THE DENTIST'S TEETH!
DON'T WORRY! WE'LL GET HIM! I JUST PUT TWO NEW GUYS ON THE JOB!
IT'S NO USE, CHIEF! HE'S TOO FAST TO CATCH!
BUT LOOK! WE GOT A SWELL CLUE!
FINE! WHAT IS IT?
FINGERPRINTS! WE FOUND THEM AT THE SCENE OF EACH CRIME!
WANTED!
OWNER OF THESE PRINTS
GREAT WORK! YOU'LL GET A MEDAL FOR THIS!
WHAT'LL WE DO NOW? HUH?
THERE HE IS AGAIN! AFTER HIM, MEN!
I DONE IT!! HA HA-HA!
NAH! WE'LL NEVER CATCH UP WITH HIM! HE MUST HAVE WINGS!
QUICK! CLEAR TH' STREET! I'VE GOT A PLAN TO GET HIM!
THERE! NOW I'VE SET UP A LOTTA TRAPS! I'LL USE 50¢ CIGARS FOR BAIT!!
?
SH!
LET'S SEE IF IT WORKS!

OUCH! THEY GOT ME!!
HOORAY!! HE'S TRAPPED!
WHY- IT'S ONLY AN OLD TALKING PARROT!
AW- YA CAN'T PIN NUDDIN' ON THIS BIRD, FLATFOOT
WHAT'LL WE DO WITH HIM, CHIEF? HAVE HIM FOR LUNCH?
GRAB HIM! TOSS HIM INTO THE COOLER!! JUST FEED HIM ON WATER AN' CRACKERS! FIRE CRACKERS!
WHUT? WHY YOU...
LOOK! I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT 'CAUSE THEM AIN'T MY FINGERPRINTS
IN FACT I AIN'T EVEN GOT ANY FINGERS!
HEY!! THESE FINGERPRINTS OF THE CRIMINAL— MATCH YOURS!
AHH!
THE JIG'S UP!
YEAH! WE MIGHT AS WELL CONFESS!
WANTED
WE DID IT!!
OH!
YOU GUYS DID IT??
GR-R-R!
Y'SEE — THINGS WERE KINDA SLOW SO WE "MANUFACTURED" A FEW CRIMES!
Y'SEE — THINGS ARE KINDA SLOW IN THE JAW GAME! HOW ABOUT LETTING ME BE YOUR MOUTH PIECE?
BAH!
DON'T WORRY! THEY'LL BE OUT IN TIME FOR NEXT MONTH'S ADVENTURE!
DOIN' IT!

....PREFACE....

OUR AMERICAN INDIANS, DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF THE UNITED STATES, WERE ROBBED OF LAND, POSSESSIONS AND HOMES BY WHITE MANS TREACHERY.—LITTLE WONDER THEY REVOLTED—DRIVEN WESTWARD, THEY WERE FINALLY GRANTED GOVT PROTECTED RESERVATIONS WHERE THEY SETTLED, RESIGNED TO THEIR FATE. IT IS ON ONE OF THESE RESERVATIONS THAT WE FIND A SMALL TRIBE LIVING MUCH THE SAME AS THEIR ANCESTORS DID BEFORE THE WHITE INVASION.

IT IS EVENING—THE AGED MEDICINE MAN, GREAT BIRD, CALLS HIS SON BEFORE HIM.
MY SON, THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOUR YOUNG BODY TO REPLACE THIS ANCIENT ONE...
THE SACRED SECRETS OF MAGIC HANDED DOWN FROM OUR FORE FATHERS SHALL BE YOURS TO KEEP UNTIL DEATH!
PERMIT THE SNAKE OF KNOWLEDGE TO BITE ME!!
FASTER—FASTER—
AND FALLS INTO DEEP, HYPNOTIC SLUMBER.
S-s-s-s!

HOURS LATER, MANTOKA AWAKENS WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIS FATHERS MAGIC POWERS.

NOT LONG AFTERWARD, THE TRIBES PEOPLE BEGIN TO SHOW CONCERN OVER REPEATED DISAPPEARANCES OF THEIR MEN.—ON EACH OCCASION, THE BRAVES HAVE VANISHED WHILE HUNTING ON GOAT MT.

MANTOKA! MY BOY HAS NOT RETURNED FROM HUNTING. I FEAR FOR HIS SAFETY.

WE SHALL SEE

ANOINTING HIMSELF WITH A [illegible] POWDER, MANTOKA [illegible] A HUGE EAGLE

HE SCALES GOAT MT. AND DIVES FOR A SPOT NEAR THE [illegible]

THIS IS A LIKELY SPOT

AFTER WALKING FOR HOURS DISGUISED AS A HUNTER, MANTOKA IS SURROUNDED

THE DOGS SYSTEMATICALLY DRIVE MANTOKA DOWN THE MOUNTAIN AND OUT OF THE RESERVATION—

EVIDENTLY THEY WISH ME TO ENTER THAT CAVERN!

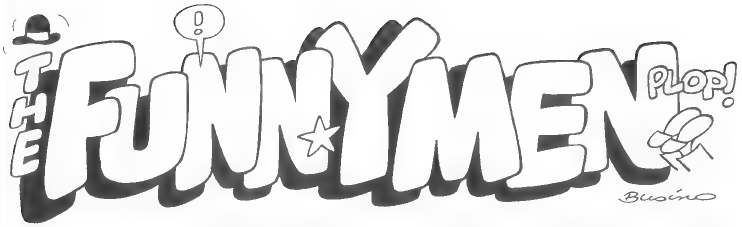
MANTOKA BREAKS AN ELECTRIC EYE BEAM, AND IMMEDIATELY—

FOR MANTOKA, ESCAPE IS AN EASY TASK, BUT HE PREFERS TO REMAIN A PRISONER. SOON TWO MEN APPEAR
AH!-A NEW RECRUIT!
GOOD WORK, BOYS! HERE'S YOUR PAY!
ALL RIGHT, REDSKIN- JUST SIGN THIS PAPER IF YOU WANT TO GET OUT!
IF YOU CAN'T WRITE, PUT YOUR THUMB-PRINT ON THE DOTTED LINE.
HERE'S AN INKPAD- HURRY UP!-GIMME YOUR PRINT!!
VERY WELL! HERE IT IS!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, INJUN!
TIE 'IM TO THAT TREE!
INSOLENT DOG!
CRACK!
MANTOKA TURNS HIS BODY INTO STONE
GOOD GOSH! YUH AINT EVEN HURTIN' HIM, BOSS!

BLAST IT!- I'VE STRAINED MY ARM!- LOCK HIM UP!- A FEW DAYS WITHOUT FOOD WILL MAKE HIM SEE THINGS OUR WAY!
BUT MANTOKA VAPORIZES AND SLIPS THROUGH THE IRON BARS OF THE DEN
HE FOLLOWS THE TWO MEN
THE PEERLESS MINING CAMP!
THIS MINE NEEDS INVESTIGATING!
INSIDE THE MINE, MANTOKA FINDS HIS FELLOWMEN HELD AS SLAVES
I SAID, WORK!
ENRAGED AT THE CRUEL TREATMENT OF HIS FRIENDS, MANTOKA GESTURES
MY ARM! IT'S ON FIRE!
BUT SUDDENLY FROM BEHIND—
THWAK
SO!- IT'S YOU! I'LL SOON FIX YOU!- BOYS— THE DYNAMITE!
WE'VE GOTTA DO SOME BLASTING ANYWAY— MIGHT AS WELL KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE, EH, SMITTY?

WATER DRIPPING FROM THE CEILING REVIVES MANTOKA.
MY HEAD! WHAT'S THIS? DYNAMITE!
SSSSSS
MANTOKA SWELLS- LARGER-LARGER- TWICE HIS NORMAL SIZE — THEN —
FREE!
HE'S LOOSE AGAIN! GET HIM!
THE MEN DIVE AT MANTOKA, BUT TRAVEL THROUGH HIM!
WHAT THA?
MANTOKA GESTURES-
ONLY THE BODIES OF RATS ARE FIT TO HOLD YOUR EVIL SOULS!
A DEAFENING ROAR IS HEARD — WATER - TONS OF IT - POUR INTO THE MINE TOWARDS THE MEN
MANTOKA! WE'RE DOOMED!
DURING THE MELEE, THE MINE-OWNER FLEES
BLUNDERING IDIOTS!
THEY'LL NEVER ESCAPE THIS!
HE LEAVES THE MINE

WITH ONLY SECONDS TO SPARE, MANTOKA CAUSES THE RAGING WATERS TO FREEZE!
LEAVING HIS FRIENDS IN SAFETY, MANTOKA SPEEDS FOR THE MINE-ENTRANCE
NOW FOR THE LEADER!
YOU!-ALIVE! IT-IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! DON'T TOUCH ME! DON'T!
I'M SEEING THINGS-GOING BATTY!-MUST GET AWAY!
BUT, BEFORE THE MINE OWNER CAN MAKE HIS GET-AWAY, THE EARTH OPENS UP AND SWALLOWS HIM-FOREVER.
E E E YOOOOOOW!
MANTOKA LEADS HIS PEOPLE HOME.-THE NEXT DAY, VULTURES CAN BE SEEN GLIDING INTO A NEWLY-FORMED CANYON-GRIM TESTIMONY OF THE FATE OF A CRUEL MAN.
YOU HAVE ACTED NOBLY, SON-OUR PEOPLE ARE ONCE AGAIN FREE TO ROAM THE HILLS AND PLAINS IN SAFETY!
ANOTHER MANTOKA STORY NEXT MONTH!



Although some people tend to think of the Golden Age as a time when superheroes and nothing else were to be found in comic books, this wasn't the case at all. There was a great variety of stuff available and even the magazines that were jammed with a half dozen crimefighters always managed to make room for comedy relief. In our Funnymen *section we'll be paying attention each issue to the cartoonists who didn't march to the dominant drummer of the Thirties and Forties, fellows who took the words* comic books *and* funny books *literally.*

BASIL WOLVERTON

He billed himself as a producer of preposterous pictures of the peculiar people who prowl this perplexing planet and from the late 1930s into the early 1950s Basil Wolverton turned out some of the most audacious and individual humor pages to be found in comic books. Although he was not above trying his hand at serious space operas and superhero sagas, Wolverton was at his best when being flippant and funny. His humor stuff had the brashness of the Forties, mixing fantasy and burlesque, sly puns and lowbrow gags. Wolverton's work displayed the same manic audacity you found in the movie comedies of such 1940s teams as Olsen & Johnson, Abbott & Costello and the Three Stooges.

Wolverton's magnum opus in the funny field was undoubtedly Powerhouse Pepper. It was for the Marvel folks that he created the character, the only baldheaded superhero of his day, in the spring of 1942. Besides being hairless, Powerhouse, who first showed up in Joker Comics #1, didn't have a superman suit. He usually combatted evil wearing a striped turtleneck sweater, slacks and heavy workshoes. Although Powerhouse Pepper owed a bit to such newspaper strips as *Salesman Sam* and *Smokey Stover* and to movies like Olsen & Johnson's *Hellzapoppin*, it was still 99% pure Wolverton, high-class and lowbrow, inventive and audacious. Very much in tune with the sort of baggy pants burlesque comedy that flourished in this country during World War II. Before Powerhouse was many issues old Wolverton had given way to his compulsive fascination with alliteration and he reached a point where he couldn't even sign his name straight. Instead he'd use by Basil Baboonbrain Wolverton, by Basil Weirdwit Wolverton, by Basil Bucketbeak Wolverton, etc.

He was equally fond of internal rhyme, and his dialogue as well as the numerous signs and posters that cluttered almost every inch of wall (and often floor and ceiling) space, were full of the stuff. "Zounds! Your snappers are as sound as a hound's" one of the physicians giving Powerhouse his Army physical observes. The three medical chaps involved in this chore are Dr. Ash Gash, Dr. Bill Drill and Dr. Jack Hack. Our hero is finally rejected because of his head. "You're out, sprout, because it's hopeless to hang a helment on a head like yours!" "Isn't my bean clean?" inquires the crestfallen Powerhouse. "It's too lean, if you know what I mean! See? A helmet teeters over your cheaters, and there's no way to clap a strap under your map!" "Pap! I must look like a sap!" Ending up in Egypt in this particular episode (sign in the sand: Will Sara wear a Sahara tiara?), Powerhouse encounters a reanimated mummy and escorts him back to America. After viewing the joys of modern civilization, which include a visit to a restaurant named simply Crude Food, wherein are offered such delights as blue blackbirds broiled in brown bovine butter and buzz bugs basted in bilgewater, the mummy decides to return to his case.

All in all Wolverton produced nearly five hundred pages about Powerhouse over the next seven years, sending him to just about every spot on Earth and to some heretofore unknown planets. His hairless hero held forth in *Joker, Gay Comics, Tessie The Typist, Millie The Model* and in five issues of his own magazine. For some reason there was a five year lapse between issue #1 and issue #2. "I was never able to make much sense of their publishing policies," Wolverton once recalled. "To even matters, though, they were never able to make much sense out of what they bought from me."

Wolverton's other major humorous creation of the early Forties was Scoop Scuttle. A weenie-nosed newsman without an overabundance of intelligence, Scoop worked for a paper called the *Daily Dally*. He was introduced in *Silver Streak #20* (April, 1942) and the magazine folded with the next issue, but that's probably a coin-

TWO!
WE GET OUR HAMS AT BLIMP'S SLAUGHTER HOUSE
OUR HAMS ARE SAWS CLAWS
ALSO BIKE ARMS - RAMS
CRASH!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - DUE TO A SUDDEM ATTACK BY LUMBAGO, MR. BLUBBERBRAIN HAS ASKED FOR A POSTPONEMENT OF THIS MATCH TILL HIS WAISTON-SIDE TOUR AGAIN BRINGS HIM AROUND TO THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY ABOUT EIGHT YEARS FROM NOW!
GET OFF THE STAGE BEFORE I SLAY INTO A RAGE!
NOT BEFORE I GET THAT DOUGH YOU OWE, BO!
BONK!
POWERMOUSE WON! GIVE HIM HIS FIVE HUNDRED BERRIES!
OKAY! OKAY! BUT THIS IS UNFAIR BECAUSE MR. BLUBBERBRAIN HAS BEEN HAVING LIVER TROUBLE LATELY! BESIDES, HIS FEET HURT AND HE'S WORRIED ABOUT HIS INCOME TAX — FOR 1939!
HA! NOW I CAN GO BUY GERTIE'S MOTHER A NEW SET OF TEET EXPENSE SLOPP IS SLOPP SLOBBERAGE!
AND NOW THAT THINGS ARE NORMAL AGAIN, WE WILL NOW GIVE AWAY OUR WEEKLY DOOR PRIZE! THE WINNING NUMBER IS 99999999999!
THAT'S MY NUMBER!
WHAT?! YOU AGAIN?
ER-AH-SORRY, BUT I MUST HAVE READ THAT NUMBER UPSIDE DOWN! IT'S REALLY 6666666666! WHO HAS THAT NUMBER?
I HAVE!! I MUST HAVE HERD MINE UPSIDE DOWN, TOO!

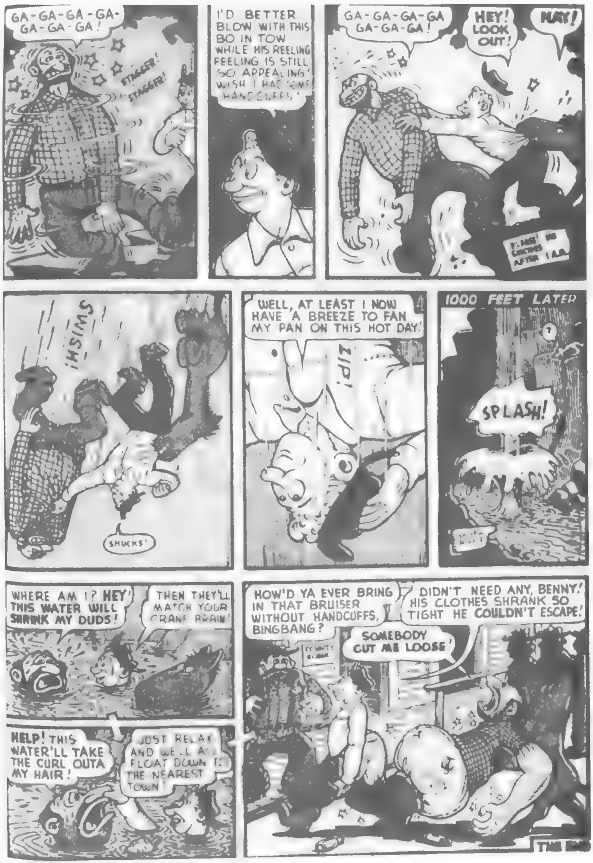
cidence. Scoop jumped over to *Daredevil*, where he remained until the spring of 1944. Pretty much unrestrained by the Gleason magazines, Wolverton was able to indulge himself with this saga of the press. Silly signs and nonsensical names abounded. The Scalyscum Aquarium, for instance, advertised its funny fish, finny fossils and foolish frogs. And Scoop was assigned, by his editor Frantic Fred, to get stories on folks such as Mayor Mushmap, Arson Larson, Screamo Adenoido (the noted opera star), Pilfer Puddlepuss (the noted crook) and Bltmggpdk X. Sgrqsdff, alias Axelgrease Fish. As further proof that few of Wolverton's publishers knew exactly what he was up to we point out that the splash page for the Scoop Scuttle yarn in *Daredevil #14* belongs with the story in *#15*. Interestingly enough, this mixup doesn't detract much from the continuity of either episode.

Unlike many of his comic book contemporaries, Basil Wolverton didn't work in the Manhattan area. A native of the Pacific Northwest, he stayed out there most of the time and did his contributing by mail. A science fiction buff, he'd considered doing pulp illustrations and an sf newspaper strip. He'd also sold magazine cartoons and done some local newspaper cartooning when, nearly thirty, he broke into the comic book field in the late 1930s. This happened more or less by chance. "On a trip to New York I'd left samples with United Features Syndicate," he explained in an interview many years later. "In 1937 Monte Bourjaily, former manager of United, formed his own newspaper syndicate, called Globe, planning to pick his cartoon features by first establishing them through his own comic book, *Circus Comics*. He asked me to contribute." For Bourjaily, the man who'd signed up such hits as *Li'l Abner* while at United, Wolverton drew *Disk-Eyes the Detective*, a humor strip, and *Spacehawks*, a straight sf feature. *Circus* collapsed after three issues and the syndicate with it.

Wolverton's next comic book work was more or less serious. In the December, 1939 issue of *Amazing Mystery Funnies* he started doing *Space Patrol*. He here began depicting those intricate alien landscapes that came to characterize his highly individual version of the universe. The decor of most of his planets, moons and asteroids was dominated by monolithic piles of rock, deep jagged chasms and warty foliage suggestive of elephantine vegetables, gigantic innards and runaway fungi. The extraterrestrial races he peopled his awesome parcels of real estate with were usually a mixture of the vegetable and the phallic, most often resembling mobile cucumbers and gherkins.

The summer of 1941 found Wolverton doing his first job for the Marvel empire, starting an association that would continue for the next decade. The feature was, even for him, an unusual one. Wolverton's original name for his new sf hero was Abyssman and it's impossible that someone with his fondness for wordplay didn't notice how close that is to abyssmal. Rechristened Rockman by Stan Lee, this Underground Secret Agent debuted in the premiere issue of *USA Comics*. A year earlier Wolverton commenced drawing his best-known straight strip, *Spacehawk* for *Target Comics* and that expired late in 1942.

Increasingly thereafter Wolverton turned to humor. For various Marvel titles he concocted fillers like *Flap Flipflop the Flying Flash*, *Dr. Dimwit*,


GA-GA-GA-GA-GA-GA-GA!
STAGGER!
STAGGER!
I'D BETTER BLOW WITH THIS BO IN TOW WHILE HIS REELING FEELING IS STILL SO APPEALING! WISH I HAD SOME HANDCUFFS!
GA-GA-GA-GA GA-GA-GA!
HEY! LOOK OUT!
NAY!
1ST MOST BIG LUGGERS AFTER I.A.A.
SWISH!
SHUCKS!
WELL, AT LEAST I NOW HAVE A BREEZE TO FAN MY PAN ON THIS HOT DAY!
1000 FEET LATER
SPLASH!
WHERE AM I? HEY! THIS WATER WILL SHRINK MY DUDS!
THEN THEY'LL MATCH YOUR CRANE BRAIN!
HELP! THIS WATER'LL TAKE THE CURL OUTA MY HAIR!
JUST RELAX AND WE'LL ALL FLOAT DOWN TO THE NEAREST TOWN
HOW'D YA EVER BRING IN THAT BRUISER WITHOUT HANDCUFFS, BINGBANG?
DIDN'T NEED ANY, BENNY! HIS CLOTHES SHRANK SO TIGHT HE COULDN'T ESCAPE!
SOMEBODY CUT ME LOOSE!
THE END

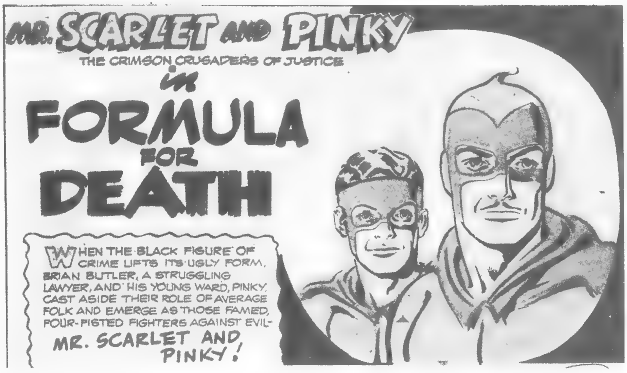
the CULTURE CORNER
HOW TO SNEEZE WITHOUT A BREEZE
CONDUCTED BY CROUCHER K.CONK, Q.O.C. (QUEER OLD KOOT)
CAN YOU SNEEZE WITHOUT HAVING TO WHEEZE UP A BREEZE? HERE'S HOW IT CAN BE DONE BY ANY ONE.
AS YOU KNOW, IT'S RUDE TO EXUDE A SNEEZE IN ONE'S FACE, BECAUSE THE GUST MAY BUST A WIG LOOSE..
AH-CHOO!
SOME SNEEZERS CARRY A BENT PIPE TO APPLY TO THEIR PANS WHEN THEY ARE ABOUT TO LET LOOSE....
AH--
BUT THIS CAUSES AN AFT DRAFT THAT OTHERS MAY RUN INTO FROM THE REAR...
--CHOO!
THE CULTURAL MANNER OF BARRING THAT BLAST FROM YOUR BAZOO IS TO CARRY A TANK OF COMPRESSED AIR ON YOUR PERSON.
OF COURSE, THERE'S THE POSSIBILITY OF FORCING TOO MUCH AIR BACK INTO YOUR BODY...
I FEEL FULL!
IN WHICH EVENT SOMETHING WILL EVENTUALLY EXPLODE, STARTING WITH YOU..
BOOM
SURE I BLEW UP MY HOST'S HOME! BUT THIS TIME I DIDN'T SNEEZE IN HIS FACE! SO THERE!
BE WISE GUYS! READ CULTURE CORNER!!

Prof. Ploop's Parade of Peculiar People, Inspector Hector the Crime Detector, Hash House Hank, Hothead Hotel, Dr. Whackyhack the Wacky Quack, etc. By 1945 Wolverton was branching out even further and he started selling material to Fawcett. For *Whiz Comics*, the home of the original Captain Marvel, he drew a one pager entitled *The Culture Corner*. Conducted by an amply bearded gent named Croucher K. Conk, Q.O.C. (for Queer Old Coot), this offered advice on coping with such everyday problems as How To Sneeze Without A Breeze, How To Keep Your Sox Up, How To Cool Your Gruel, How To Eat Beans Without Soiling Your Jeans, etc. More ambitious was *Mystic Moot and His Magic Snoot*, a parody of Ibis the Invincible that began in that magician's own magazine. Moot, somewhat subdued, also showed up in *Comic Comics*, where he had four pages each issue in which to work wonders by rubbing his sausage of a nose. Wolverton usually didn't sign this one and his habit of hanging funny signs in the background was kept to a minimum. In one zoo sequence, however, he did manage to slip in a few—*Don't Laugh At The Giraffe! Don't Leer At The Deer! Don't Gape At The Ape! Don't by Guyin' The Lion!* Wolverton continued to turn out funny stuff into the early Fifties. He did, for instance, *Bing Bang Buster and His Horse Heddy* to run in *Black Diamond Western*. Then he went straight for a spell, doing sf and weird tales for some of the many horror comics that blossomed in the 1950s.

Back in 1946 he had suddenly gained national fame. Not because of his sf or his humor, but because he won the contest to depict Lena the Hyena. The fabulously ugly Lena of Lower Slobovia was one of Al Capp's teaser characters, alluded to but never seen in the *Li'l Abner* strip. Wolverton submitted seven entries and the one that finally graced the strip was selected by a jury made up of Salvador Dali, Boris Karloff and Frank Sinatra. "The $525 awarded was relatively small for a contest of such magnitude," Wolverton said some years later. "But for the next year or two, after *Life* publicized the event with its cover shot of Lena, there was much caricature work to be done. Among the buyers was a national radio network, the movie studios and several advertising agencies. At long last I was able to afford an eraser for each hand."

One of the things this notoriety did was bring out the worst side of Wolverton's work. He upped the ugly content of his later stuff, drawing people who looked even more like private parts, animated intestines or malignant growths. The charges made by some, notably Jules Feiffer, that Wolverton's work is gross and ugly were mostly based on the sort of thing he did after Lena. For *Mad* and *Plop* and in books like *Barflize*, this is Wolverton as much as was Powerhouse Pepper. But his best work was done when he was being wacky and playing with language, parody, anatomy, having his personal kind of cerebral yet lowbrow fun. And that stuff appears in the pages he did for the comic books of the early 1940s.

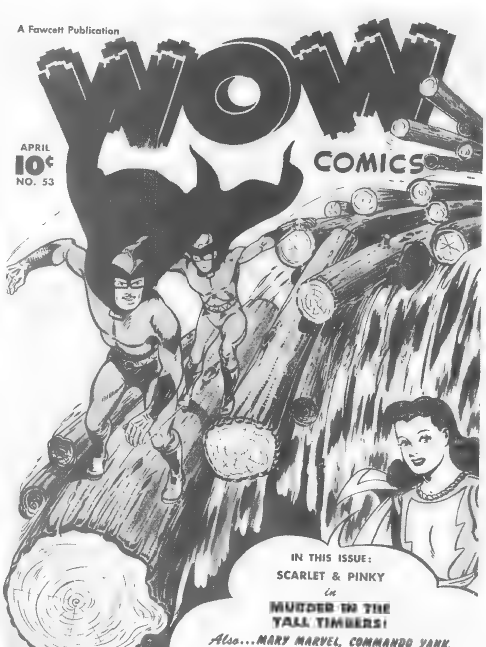
Second Banana. Not every hero hits it big. Many interesting and exciting characters never really headline their own titles although they may gain devoted followings. This feature will take a look at one of the minor characters that populated the comic books of the 1940s.


MR. SCARLET AND PINKY
THE CRIMSON CRUSADERS OF JUSTICE
IN
FORMULA FOR DEATH
WHEN THE BLACK FIGURE OF CRIME LIFTS ITS UGLY FORM, BRIAN BUTLER, A STRUGGLING LAWYER, AND HIS YOUNG WARD, PINKY, CAST ASIDE THEIR ROLE OF AVERAGE FOLK AND EMERGE AS THOSE FAMED, FOUR-FISTED FIGHTERS AGAINST EVIL- MR. SCARLET AND PINKY!

Here was a dependable journeyman comic book hero, a sort of generic costumed crimefighter who went about his business for nearly a decade. Never quite first rate, only given star billing intermittently, he nevertheless had a respectable career and his exploits were almost always entertaining. In many ways he was the typical second banana.

Mr. Scarlet got off to a pretty good start in the first issue of Fawcett's *Wow Comics* (Spring, 1941). C.C. Beck drew him on the cover, Jack Kirby drew his seven page debut story. He was another of those impatient lawmen who turned vigilante in their spare time. As a caption in Ed Herron's script explained it—"Special Prosecutor by day, Brian Butler discards his legal robes at midnight to become the mysterious 'Mr. Scarlet', an underworld legend—a myth who strikes with merciless reality and brings to justice those who escape the law through its legal loopholes." As Kirby depicted him, Mr. S was a lean, acrobatic fellow who could look a shade Satanic if the occasion called for it. He had no superpowers at all.

For the first few issues *Wow's* contents offered the crimson crusader little in the way of competition. Most of the other stories were sweatshop dregs, featuring such uninspired heroes as Shipwreck Roberts, the White Rajah and Jim Dolan. Dolan was the "hard-hitting editor" of a pulp magazine who dabbled in detection with consistently lacklustre results. With the sixth issue (April-July, 1942) all this deadwood was dumped and a couple of costumed heroes came aboard. In addition to Commando Yank and Phantom Eagle *Wow* added Spooks, an imaginative fantasy by Dave Berg. Mr. Scarlet, who'd recently picked up a boy sidekick named Pinky, had two stories in the issue, totalling twent-five pages. The artist was Phil Bard, whose enthusiastic if not always accurate



style made his pages look as though they'd been turned out by a cockeyed Jack Kirby. After Bard the Jack Binder art shop took over for a spell.

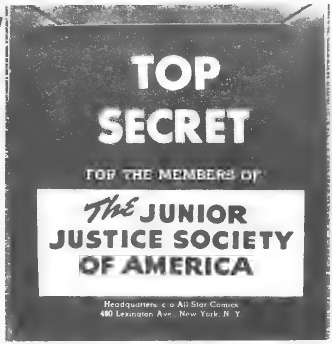
Some of these early adventures were relatively grim, offering the watered down pulp magazine horror that was prevalent in many of the Fawcett scripts of the period. In a typical episode the redrobed knight of right and his crimsonclad companion were confronted by not one but six gruesome villains—the Horned Hood, the Ghost, the Black Clown, the Thorn, the Laughing Skull and Doctor Death. Although these rascals use everything from a ferocious gorilla to a "ghastly mummy-ray rifle," Mr. Scarlet and Pinky manage to round them all up. In another episode they prowl a seemingly haunted mansion to defeat the black-cloaked Phantom of Marston Manor. And so it went, no sooner did they overcome the loathsome Black Sphinx than up popped Morto, AKA the Spirit of Murders Past.

The biggest blow to Mr. Scarlet's chances for stardom came along in the ninth issue of *Wow* in the person of a sweet, openfaced teenage girl. When she said, "Shazam", she became Mary Marvel and for the next several years all the magazine's other characters had to play second fiddle to her. A few months after her advent Mr. Scarlet and Pinky, possibly in an effort to beef up their act, added Batman and Robin type utility belts to their costumes. They also took to using "red-ray guns". These formidable weapons felled crooks with an infra-red beam of light and could also be used for taking pictures. Included in Pinky's belt was a complete developing kit, in case instant prints of the photos were needed.

By the middle 1940s, when Jack Binder was drawing them without benefit of sweatshop, the adventures had become lighter in tone and shorter. Harry Anderson drew the strip next, alternating with Binder. After that Carl Pfeuffer, a veteran of such newspaper strips as *Don Dixon* and *Gordon Fife* as well as comic book heroes like Sub-Mariner, Don Windslow and Hopalong Cassidy, signed on. A gifted though hurried artist, Pfeuffer did an interesting job. During his tenure Mr. Scarlet and Pinky dealt with such problems as the Dance Marathon of Death and Murder in the Tall Timbers. After Binder returned for a stint, Bob Fujitani came in to draw the feature for the remainder of its days. Fujitani, who'd developed a real knack for rendering slavering killers and fiends while working on Hangman over at *Pep Comics*, served an effective though subdued stint.

Mr. Scarlet held on until *Wow's* final issue, #69 (Fall, 1948). He was in every single issue from first to last, sometimes twice, and he managed to stay in business even after Mary Marvel dropped out and was replaced by an allegedly hilarious teenager named Ozzie. He also appeared in all seven issues of *America's Greatest Comics* and assorted Fawcett reprints. Not a bad record for a guy who had nothing much but a red suit and a lot of determination going for him.

Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been



A Member Of The Justice Society Of America?

You could do a lot of things with a dime in the Thirties and Forties. You could, of course, buy a fat sixty four page comic book. And with just ten cents you could also buy two 12 ounce bottles of Pepsi or two candy bars or you could join one of the many clubs and secret societies that were continually, and enticingly, soliciting members in the pages of many Golden Age comics.

There had been clubs for just about as long as there had been original material comic books. All of them imitating the numerous similar organizations set up by kid radio serials and the pulp magazines. The Shadow and Doc Savage had clubs and, later, so did Tom Mix and Captain Midnight on the airwaves. To avail yourself of the radio offers you needed a dime *and* a box top, but the funny book fraternities asked only for a dime.

Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, the ill-fated founder of what became the DC empire, offered a couple of clubs in his pioneering publications. *More Fun* had the Fun Club, run by Jolly Bill, the Chief Funster. For your dime you got a button and a membership card. The button displayed the head of a laughing elf and the slogan—"Clean Comics, Clean Words, Clean Shows, Clean Books." Not exactly everybody's idea of fun. Somewhat more exciting was the Junior Federal Men Club that did its recruiting in the pages of *Adventure Comics*. Fronted by Steve Carson, hero of Siegel and Shuster's Federal Men, the organization was similar to the Junior G-Men club that Post cereals was touting via the Sunday funnies. Post had the advantage of having a real former G-Man, Melvin Purvis, as their spokesperson. The ten cent fee sent to Steve Carson procured a badge, a certificate and operator's number. Each issue of the magazine devoted two pages to club news and listed the members as they joined up. Special Operator No. 1 was Matt Pitkanen of South Ozone Park, NY.

The first superhero to have a club was, appropriately enough, Superman. His got going in the spring of 1939, inviting charter members with a socko two page full color ad at the center of *Action Comics* and the new *Superman* quarterly. It was called Supermen of America and the copy described the chance to join as "the opportunity of a lifetime!" What you got when you enlisted was—"1. A beautifully colored Certificate of Membership, suitable for framing! 2. A large Membership Button in full color, with a patented clasp! 3. Superman's Secret Code which you must have to read Superman's Secret Message in every issue of ACTION COMICS!"

Anything Superman could do, Captain Marvel could do. His club, promoted in the pages of *Whiz Comics* and *Captain Marvel Adventures*, was launched in 1941. While similar in many ways to what others were doing, Cap's club had the distinct advantage of costing you just one nickel (in coin or stamps) to join. What you bought with your nickel was a badge and a membership card, which explained the secret code. The code was a pretty simple one—Z=A, Y=B, X=C, etc. Besides sending you code messages via Fawcett magazines, Captain Marvel also mailed members an occasional letter. Chatty in style, these were devoted mostly to hustling various items. In one letter the redclad captain managed to push Mary Marvel and *Wow Comics*, *Mechanix Illustrated* and red suspenders. "Jeepers, isn't that crisp air great to get out in? I sure hope you and your gang are all out playing football everyday. If you are, but your pants keep falling down every time you're tackled, just remember that you can keep them up with Captain Marvel's dandy new suspenders. You can get these colorful suspenders, with Captain Marvel's picture, at your local J.C. Penny or W.T. Grant story. Everybody's wearing 'em!"

For the more patriotic-minded youths Marvel offered a Captain America Club. Called the Sentinels of Liberty, it started enrolling in the very first issue of *Captain America* (March, 1941). Dues set you back one thin dime. What you got was a membership card containing the code key, plus a handsome badge with the starspangled hero's face on it. As the recuiting copy pointed

HI-YA, PALS!
SENTINELS OF LIBERTY
SECRET CLUB NEWS
MESSAGE FROM CAPTAIN AMERICA: HELLO GANG!
TAKE ADVANTAGE of CAPTAIN AMERICA'S SENSATIONAL OFFER NOW!
MEMBERSHIP CARD

out, "this is not a picture button toy but a real high quality badge. Made of the same metal used in police and firemen badges." The coupon that had to be signed and sent in went beyond most others in what it asked of new members. "I would like to join CAPTAIN AMERICA'S Sentinels of Liberty," read the first line, "and help to fight spies and traitors to the U.S.A." Not a sexist outfit, the Sentinels assured potential joiners that "girls as well as boys may do their share in keeping America free and democratic!"

Kids with an excess of patriotic zeal could also enlist in several clubs that the obliging Fox line of comics set up in the early 1940s. Readers of *Weird Comics* were offered the opportunity to join the American Eagles. Sponsored by the red, white and blue superhero the Eagle, this organization was dedicated to fighting Nazism. Before the United States even entered the war, the Eagle was explaining to potential AEs, "We must fight... to keep our shores free of the insidious demons of Nazidom... We must fight the 5th Column. Fight it and smash it and drive it back into the catacombs of the dark ages whence it was spawned! The American Eagles are created to do just that!" Here your dime (plus a three cent stamp) bought you a membership card, complete with "secret oath of allegiance," a badge and a secret code book.

Over at Fox' *Wonderworld Comics* a superpatriot called U.S. Jones was running a similar group. The U.S. Jones Cadets were "pledged to uphold the principles of true Democracy in the All-American way." Your dime and three cent stamp produced a National Emergency Kit, containing membership card, etc. Since *V Comics* only lasted two issues, it's unlikely that V-Man's V-Boys Defense Corps drummed up a large roster of members. The club oath went—"I swear by the sign of the 'V' that I will be clean, honest, truthful, ever ready to defend my country and its ideals... to work for victory... for defense... for the fullest devotion to our country and flag!"

Without a doubt the classiest comic book club of the Forties was the Junior Justice Society of America. It was well worth the whole fifteen cents initiation fee. For one thing, joining made you part of the impressive gang of heroes who hung out at DC's *All Star Comics*. This included Hawkman, Dr. Fate, Starman, the Atom, the Spectre, Johnny Thunder and Wonder Woman. Not to mention the prestigious quartet of Honorary Members—Superman, Batman, the Flash and Green Lantern. The four color membership certificate had a somewhat more liberal tone than most and committed each member to a pledge to "help keep our country united in the face of enemy attempts to make us think we Americans are all different, because we are rich or poor; employer or worker; native or foreign-born; Gentile or Jew; Protestant or Catholic. And makes the further pledge to defeat this Axis propaganda, seeking to get us to fight among ourselves, so we cannot successfully fight our enemies—knowing full well that we are *all* AMERICANS believing in DEMOCRACY and are resolved to do everything possible to help win the war!"

Among the other items sent out in the membership kit were a letter from Wonder Woman, a silver-plated all metal JJSA badge (later replaced by a fabric sew-on emblem), a decoder with thirteen different codes (named after the various senior JSA members) and a four page comic book story about the Minute Man, drawn by Sheldon Moldoff. The codes were a bit more sophisticated than most, using symbols and Greek letters along with the regular letters.

Since most of the clubs signed you up for life and required no additional dues, many thousands of us around the country must still be members. Any invitations to club reunions sent to me care of this magazine will be forwarded.

WOMEN IN COMICS

The BLACK ANGEL

A NEW NAZI MENACE DESCENDS UPON GREAT BRITAIN . . GIANT CREATURES OF THE NIGHT STRIKE SWIFTLY TO LEAVE A BLOODY TRAIL OF DEATH . . . . BUT THE FEARLESS BLACK ANGEL SMASHES THIS EERIE FOE!
BLACK CLOUDS OF NIGHT HOVER THEMSELVES ABOUT BRITAIN . . MANY SEARCHLIGHTS PIERCE THE GLOOM . THE SILENT VIGIL CONTINUES . UNTIL . . .
THIS IS A WARNING BULLETIN TO ALL AIR DEFENSE STATIONS! A NAZI BOMBER HAS SLIPPED THROUGH OUTER RING OF OUR AIR DEFENSE . .

Here was a lady who had absolutely no fear of flying. And her courage is all the more impressive when you consider that she had to contend not only with the usual hazards of air travel but with the extra dangers that faced a free-lance World War II combat pilot. On top of that lovely ravenhaired Sylvia Manners also had to cope with such out of the ordinary problems as giant vampire bats, witches and werewolves.

She first winged into view in #2 of *Air Fighters Comics* (November, 1942), the issue that also introduced Airboy. Bringing new meaning to the expression "flying by the seat of your pants," the Black Angel's purple costume was beyond doubt one of the tightest fitting outfits to be seen in the 1940s comics. In her first outing she went up against an impressive female flyer known as Baroness Blood, "the Nazi cobra of the skies." In just eight pages the Black Angel manages to save a British aircraft factory from a Nazi air raid, escape from the nasty blonde baroness' torture chamber and then defeat her in an aerial dogfight. As the Nazi plane goes down in flames, the Angel remarks, "Ha! Ha! That's *ONE* landing you won't walk away from, baroness!! ... and neither will you drink your blood cocktail tonight to celebrate a new victory!" In subsequent adventures she flew to Nazi-held Greece to overcome a witch known as the Hag From Hades and her pet wolfman and saved her native England from Nazis disguised as giant bats.

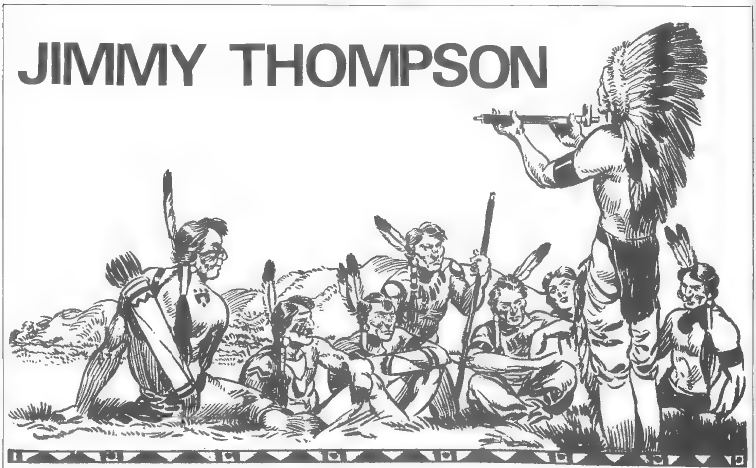
The first artist to draw the feature was John Cassone. While he was good at depicting the necessary planes and weaponry, his real forte was the female form. He was especially fond of showing his heroine from the rear and if he'd had a family crest it surely would've had buttocks in its design. The Black Angel was grounded after the 22nd issue (Fall, 1945) of the magazine.

FORGOTTEN ARTISTS OF THE Golden Age

BUSCEMA

From the middle Thirties to the middle Forties hundreds of artists toiled in the comic book field. A few dozen of them are still active today, a few dozen more are remembered and sometimes written about. The rest remain forgotten, their names unknown and their work seldom seen. Each issue in this section we'll be turning our attention to one of those unsung artists of the past. Resurrecting, briefly, someone whose work brightened the comic books back in the days when the magazines were more eclectic, more open to divergent styles, than they are now.

JIMMY THOMPSON



Jimmy Thompson was a man who loved to draw Indians. He began his comic book career doing just that, but over the next fifteen or so years he did everything from serious superheroes to comedy cowboys. Thompson managed to work for most of the major companies, including DC, Fawcett and Marvel. He was about the only artist of the period to draw not only the Human Torch but Sub-Mariner and the Angel as well. He also worked on Mary Marvel and drew the definitive Robotman.

Although he was fondest of doing stories set in the outdoors and the West, Jimmy Thompson had an appealing way of drawing urban adventures. His cities are full of dark alleys and odd skyscrapers. While he was capable of working in the illustrative drybrush style championed by artists

THE ANGEL
DEATH ORDER
THE ANGEL, ON HIS WAY HOME FROM A MISSION SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED, IS PLUNGED INTO MORE SPINE-TINGLING ADVENTURE WHEN HE BECOMES EMBROILED IN THE DARK SUPERSTITIONS AND MYSTICISMS OF THE STRANGE ORIENT IN THE .....
SECRET OF THE BLIND IDOL!

like Alex Raymond, he seemed to prefer a more cartoony, more lushly inked approach. Probably the best examples of this latter approach are to be found in the many Robotman stories he drew. In these he achieved just the right mix of the humorous and the straight, a blend that suited the not quite serious exploits of the celebrated metallic detective.

Thompson liked to stretch figures and foreshorten them, but not in the manner of Jack Kirby or even Jack Cole. It was more akin to the way some of the animated cartoons played with anatomy. Another thing he was fond of was the upshot, placing his camera at ground level and shooting up as it were. There are numerous scenes where the reader finds himself seated in the gutter looking up at the action. When Thompson depicted civilians, almost all of the coats and trousers flared at wrist and ankle, giving his urban cast of characters a distinct bellbottomed look.

Apparently based in the Philadelphia area, Thompson worked for that city's Ledger Syndicate for several years in the Thirties. In the summer of 1937 he

inherited *War On Crime*. This daily newspaper strip, which dealt with the exploits of the FBI in tracking down such celebrity public enemies as Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd and Ma Barker, had the personal approval of J. Edgar Hoover. It folded in January of 1938. Late that same year Thompson was back in the funny papers, drawing the venerable *Hairbreadth Harry*. For decades the strip had been a burlesque of dime novel adventure and movie melodrama, featuring a stalwart and manly blond hero and a villain with waxed moustache and rakish top hat. When Thompson took over the strip, though, the syndicate decided to try to play it straight. He made a brave try, but his *Hairbreadth Harry* was at best a curious hybrid. After *Harry* became defunct, Thomas next drew *Roy Powers, Eagle Scout* in the wake of the formidable Frank Godwin. Either because of modesty or syndicate policy he never signed any of these strips.

During these same years Jimmy Thompson also started drawing for comic books, initially for the Philadelphia publisher David McKay. For *King Comics*, which was mostly dedicated to reprinting King Features strips such as *Popeye, Flash Gordon, Mandrake, Little Annie Rooney* and *The Little King*, Thompson drew *Redmen*. Laid out like a Sunday page, it ran in the exact middle of each issue and dealt with a Mohawk brave named Black Hawk. Filled with faithfully rendered details about Indian life and lore,

ROBOTMAN
ROBBIE, BEING JUST A DOG, ISN'T ELIGIBLE TO JOIN THE BOY SCOUTS, BUT HE CERTAINLY THINKS HIGHLY OF THEIR MOTTO "BE PREPARED." SO HE PREPARES WITH A THOROUGHNESS THAT AMAZES ROBOTMAN, WHO HIMSELF IS READY FOR EVERYTHING—EXCEPT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ROBBIE STARTS TOTING HIS EMERGENCY KIT FOR CRIME!

SO FAR IT'S BEEN A PEACEFUL EVENING. BUT NOW THAT ROBBIE THE ROBOTDOG HAS A BRIGHT IDEA, ALMOST ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!
ROBOTMAN OUR TROUBLES ARE OVER!
HUH—? WHAT TROUBLES?

-- WHAT TROUBLES!
WHY ROBOTMAN, THINK OF THE TIMES WHEN WE'VE HAD NARROW ESCAPES FROM DEATH AT THE HANDS OF CROOKS! I FOR ONE AM TAKING NO MORE CHANCES—I'M GOING TO BE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES.

Redmen was without a trace of cowboys and Indians hokum in its early years. Thompson concentrated on conflicts among tribes and mixed in Indian magic and folk tales. Black Hawk was shown as a man of skill and intelligence who could speak without sounding like Tonto or a movie Injun. When *Magic Comics* got going in the summer of 1939, Thompson provided a similar feature entitled *Indian Lore*.

His magnum opus during these years was *Red Eagle*, an ambitious sixty-four page black and white work published in the summer of 1938 as one of McKay's Feature Books. It chronicled the adventures of a young Cherokee brave, mixing action, Indian legends, fantasy and romance. *Red Eagle* ended with the death of its hero and his love, Blue Sky, an unusual climax for a Thirties comic book story. "The great bears with whom Red Eagle had been a friend came and covered the bodies over with leaves and sticks. Then one day a strange flower was seen growing on the grave. This was the first violet," concludes Thompson. "This was the Great Spirit's living monument, so that all people might always remember this tale of love and bravery." The next Feature Book was also drawn by Thompson. *Gangbusters*, based on the then popular radio show, offered a more conventional sort of funny book fare.

In the early 1940s Jimmy Thompson branched out. For Street & Smith's *Shadow Comics* he drew the exploits of a boy detective named Danny Garrett, for *Heroic Comics* he did Music Master, a superhero who possessed the rather dubious ability of being able to turn into music. Marvel kept him busy with Human Torch, Angel and Sub-Mariner. Thompson floundered with Bill Everett's aquatic creation, giving his oddshaped head an odder shape than it had ever had before. Even less satisfying was his work on Mary Marvel and Captain Midnight. Done for Fawcett while he was laboring in the Jack Binder sweat shop, these pages were obviously worked over by other hands than his. None of which was anywhere near as gifted.

Thompson's finest hour in the Forties was with Robotman. Several other artists had drawn the metal man before him, among them Paul Cassidy, Chuck Winter and John Daly. Thompson's first effort appeared in Star Spangled Comics #26 (November 1943). With issue #29 he introduced Robbie the Robotdog. Built by Robotman, the mechanical sleuth hound was initially a polite and sedate creature. After a hiatus of a few issues, though, Robbie came back in slightly altered form. Besides a dogsuit to wear over his robot body on certain occasions, he also had a new personality. Feisty and vain, he now reads Sherlock Holmes and assures his metal master he's a crack investigator himself. Once Thompson had his basic team he went on to produce a long string of attractive looking, entertaining Robotman yarns. He stayed with the character throughout its run in *Star Spangled*, which ended in #82 (July, 1948), and continued with Robotman when he moved to *Detective Comics*.

While working for DC Thompson got to draw about the West again, but not in the same way he had with *Redmen*, etc. For the bi-monthly *All Funny Comics* he did *Two-Gun Percy*, a not exactly hilarious cowboy spoof. Much more serious was *Rodeo Rick*, turned out for *Western Comics*. Jimmy Thompson also drew western and true crime stuff for some of the Avon comics in the early 1950s. By the middle of the decade his work was no longer to be seen. Whether he retired, moved on to other things or went on to the Happy Hunting Ground we haven't been able, thus far, to find out.

Jack Cole's first shape-changing hero wasn't the redclad Plastic Man but rather an obscure chap named Mantoka, Maker of Indian Magic. Inside we present a complete and uncut story.

The Man of Bronze, Doc Savage once had his own comic book with impressive art by illustrator and gallery painter, William A. Smith. Beefed up from the pulps by the addition of a costume and magic ruby inside we offer an original story reprinted from the Golden Age.

Fred Schwab, boy cartoonist, returns with Hemlock Shomes and Doctor Potsam, a lively send-up of all detective yarns in general and Sherlock Holmes in specific.

Plus an interview with Gill Fox, creator of many excellent strips for both newspapers and comic books and once the editor of Quality Comics top titles. And a look at funnyman Basil Wolverton, Forgotten Artist Jimmy Thompson, Silver Streak, The Black Angel and Mr. Scarlet.

Finally we ask the musical question, "Do You Now or Have You Ever Belonged to The Justice Society Of America?

VOLUME TWO

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